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A Study of Civil War Leadership: Gettysburg as a Turning Point

Written and Researched by Joseph Griffith

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The Civil War was a pivotal and tragic period in our country's history. The years that spanned from 1860-1865 were years that were paved with the blood of American men, and what determined whether these men lived or died was the men who led them. Civil War leadership on both sides of the battlefield was critical to the success of the Union and the failure of the Confederacy. Success did not happen overnight, however. The road for the Union was a long and frustrating one, with constant changes in leadership positions and a plague of poor generals. This was not the case for the whole war. The Battle of Gettysburg served as a turning point for the Union, and the Union rode this change to an eventual victory in the war. It was more of a progressive turn, with the effects unseen until 1864. The Confederacy proved successful at the onset of the war, but again, Gettysburg was a turning point for them as well only in a negative sense. Gettysburg was pivotal for the victory of the Union and the failure of the Confederacy. The war leading up to the battle, the battle itself, and the years that followed were vital in showing the progression of leadership for both sides and ultimately the Union proved stronger after years of searching for the perfect General in Chief. It was a process to be sure, but it was a process that ended in the Union's favor.

Before one understands the reasons that the Union proved successful, one must understand the background of the war, the leadership, and the tactics that they employed. Many historians have analyzed and studied the Civil War since the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. There are a plethora of sources that talk about the Union, the Confederacy, the battles, the leaders, and the causes of the war. As far as leadership is concerned there are a few choice authors that paint a picture of what leadership was like for both sides of the war. There are both primary and secondary authors that effectively express how important leadership was and how these leaders changed the course of the war.

T. Harry Williams wrote the classic work on the Union leadership entitled *Lincoln and his Generals*. He tracks leadership from the start of the war until the Battle of Appomattox. He writes about Lincoln's Generals in a light that exemplifies their character, their strengths, their weaknesses, and how they succeeded or failed. More often than not he wrote about their failures, which was an accurate portrayal of Union leaders before Grant took over in 1864. His main focuses are on the major Union Generals but he references the lesser known ones that were under the command of higher ranked generals. He spends a lot of time talking about a man named George B. McClellan and his failure as a general. He not only talks about McClellan the general, but he talks about McClellan the man. He references McClellan's high view of himself¹, his failure to gauge enemy forces effectively², and his inactivity during pivotal battles and movements.³ The only other general to receive as much study as McClellan was Grant, who was the antithesis of McClellan. This is vital in understanding the broader scheme of leadership throughout the war. The point of Williams work was to show the progression of Lincoln as a commander in chief, but he also showed the progression of Union leadership until it culminated under Grant. He argues that the path to Union victory was a steady one that evolved over time after a long period of frustration and failure.

On the Confederate side, there is a book written by a former Confederate captain named William P. Snow. He wrote a book called *Lee and his Generals*, which contains biographies and accounts of the various confederate generals. It was originally published in 1867 and he writes extensively on Lee, Jackson, and Johnston but he also writes about the other generals like Longstreet, Hill, and Ewell. He writes using a lot of primary documents and firsthand accounts.

¹ T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and his Generals*, (New York, Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1952), p.24-25

² *Ibid*, p.49-51

³ *Ibid*, p. 62-63, 126, 174

He claims that if the Confederacy was more aggressive after Gettysburg, then they may have had a chance but it was that same aggression that cost them in the end. He also claims that the focus on the defense of Richmond and the assault on Washington was mishandled and could have been successful if it were not for Lee's other generals. Observing this in the context of the rest of the war is important for the understanding of Lee's leadership as well as the rest of his generals. He praises Lee for his strategic genius and he also praises Jackson for his offensive tenacity and Christian values.⁴

Ezra J. Warner wrote the books *Generals in Gray* and *Generals in Blue*. These books give summaries of the lives of the generals of the Civil War. His work is not extensive, but provides a good starting point. Another good starting book is a book by two men named R. Ernest Dupuy and Trevor N. Dupuy called *The Compact History of the Civil War*. This piece offers a good history of the war as a whole and is a good source of background and supplemental information about the battles and campaigns that these leaders commanded. It is written in a nice and succinct manner and provides a lot of the necessary information that compliments the biographical information that Williams and Snow present.

Williams and Snow touch on the actual Battle of Gettysburg from the perspective of the generals in command. Williams keeps it brief and talks about Meade and his success there.⁵ Snow writes on it from Lee's perspective mainly but touches on it in other accounts. There is an author that writes an extensive account of the battle. His analysis of command at the Battle of Gettysburg is one that is revered in academic circles to this day. This work is *The Gettysburg Campaign: A Study in Command* by Edwin B. Coddington. His analysis of the battle is very

⁴ *Ibid*, p.174-178

⁵ T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and his Generals*, (New York, Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1952), p. 263-265

technical and written in great depth. His analysis of the three day battle is written in a day by day basis and discusses the strategies of both Lee and Meade when it comes to the preparations, strategies, and execution of the battles. His account of Cemetery Hill and Pickett's Charge are written in great detail and shows the desperation of the Confederacy and the tenacity and genius of Meade's defense.⁶ Coddington argues that the Union victory was due to their stellar defense of Cemetery Hill, their strategy on the third day, and the leadership of George Meade. His strategy to not fully retaliate against the Confederate artillery, and because of this they had the munitions to repel Pickett's Charge with relative ease.⁷ Another author that effectively writes on the Battle of Gettysburg is Stephen W. Sears and his book *Gettysburg*. He writes in a more general manner than Coddington who focuses on command. Sears tells a cohesive tale of the battle and is informative in his description of the event. His portrayal of Pickett's charge is just as good as Coddington's and he creates an immersive experience that engages the reader. He argues that the battle was a turning point in the war, and a point where the union offensive began. His main evidence is the leadership skills of George Meade, the Union defense, and the mistakes made by James Longstreet.⁸

All in all, these authors present one common theme. Leadership was critical to the success of an army. The Union was at its best under competent generals and its worst under incompetent ones. The Confederate Army for the most part was consistent with leadership, but did not stand a chance against a competent Union army. They were successful against bad generals and they underestimated the Union's competent generals which led to their downfall. The Confederates had their share of blunders but they were fewer than the Union's and came

⁶ Edwin B. Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign: A Study in Command*, (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968) p.493-506

⁷ *Ibid*, p.497-498

⁸ Stephen W. Sears, *Gettysburg*, (Boston, Houghton Mifflin Co., 2003) p.xiv

closer to the end of the war. These authors support the argument that Gettysburg was indeed a turning point for the war in favor of the Union, and the details in their works further prove this. The difference between Union leadership before Gettysburg, during Gettysburg, and after Gettysburg is very apparent and it becomes apparent when one observes the movements of the Union after July of 1863. The analysis of these periods of leadership is critical to understanding the conflict as a whole. The same can be said of Confederate leadership, and the same analysis must be implemented with them as well.

Section 1: Union Leadership before Gettysburg

The start of the Civil War marked an interesting time for the Union and its military leadership. It had almost no army, few leaders, and moderately effective weapons. An army was drafted and munitions were created fairly quickly, but leadership was a whole different story. Union leadership at its finest didn't emerge until 1864.⁹ Until then, the Union faced the struggle of poor leadership from many of its generals until it began to improve in July of 1863 and peaked in 1864.

The first general in chief was a man named Winfield Scott. He was a veteran of the War of 1812 and the Mexican War and was a distinguished general. He envisioned a four year war and came up with the "Anaconda plan" which was the inspiration for Grant's strategy in 1864-1865. At the outbreak of the war, he was 75 years old and couldn't ride into battle.¹⁰ The other general of note in the early part of the war was a man named John E. Wool. He was two years older than Scott and also showed signs of aging. He often repeated things that he had said a few

⁹ T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and his Generals*, (New York, Alfred A Knopf, 1952) p.3

¹⁰ Ezra J. Warner, *Generals in Blue*, (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1964) p.429-430

minutes prior, suffered from shaking of the hands that was so bad that he needed aides to put his hat on straight. T. Harry Williams wrote that there was “Not an officer in the first year of the war who was capable of efficiently administering and fighting a large army.”¹¹ He references the fact that they only had knowledge of smaller forces, they lacked of topographical awareness, and they suffered from poor planning.¹² This idea holds true, especially when a general by the name of George B. McClellan enters the picture.

McClellan had a very interesting military career. Lincoln and Scott had developed a plan to blockade the South and to cut off resources. Lincoln realized how important the State of Mississippi was to the success of their plan, so he implemented a strategy known as the Mississippi Campaign and placed McClellan in charge of it. This was in May of 1861 and Scott expressed concerns about his own campaign, which is a telltale sign of his lack of leadership prowess. He wrote to McClellan saying not to invade the South. He wrote, “the great danger now pressing upon us-the impatience of our patriotic and loyal Union friends. They will urge instant vigorous action....”¹³

It was after this that Lincoln appointed a man named Irvin McDowell, who was a commander of the regulars, to lead the newly formed Army of the Potomac. This differed from McClellan’s role, which was the command of the forces drafted for the Mississippi Campaign. McDowell went on to have a very tragic and awful military career. He had promise, he was honest and humble, but everything he tried ended in failure. He was the first American general to command an army of 30,000 men and he did not know what to do with them. He had a small

¹¹ T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and his Generals*, (New York, Alfred A Knopf, 1952) p.4

¹² *Ibid*

¹³ Scott to McClellan, May 3, 1861, *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, LI, pt. 1, (Washington, 1880-1901) p.369-370

staff that lacked experience, a bad map of Virginia and a young army to train. This was a bad start for a young general.¹⁴ His first and only battle test was at the First Battle of Manassas. Lincoln wanted McDowell to move and crush the Confederates at Manassas. McDowell presented a plan to flank the Confederate army out of their defensive works and hopefully cut off reinforcements. McDowell's fatal flaw, however, was that he was not confident in the plan that he drafted.¹⁵ When a soldier does not believe in his own strategy, then problems are sure to arise. The Battle of Manassas was a disaster for the Union. Delays in movements and attacks alongside weak preliminary attacks against P.G.T. Beauregard and Joseph Johnston gave the Confederates an early advantage. By the time Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson arrived with confederate reinforcements, the battle had been lost. The confederates were victorious at Manassas and McDowell was left to ponder his failure.¹⁶ McDowell was relieved of command and it was passed on to George B. McClellan.

Lincoln invited McClellan to a cabinet meeting shortly before he was appointed. Scott was not extended the same invitation, which made him quite angry. McClellan wrote about this event in his memoirs aptly titled *Own Story*. He met with Scott and after conversing with him he mentioned that he had a meeting with the president and had to leave. He wrote "Upon this the general became quite indignant and said that it is highly improper that I should receive such an invitation to his exclusion..."¹⁷ Scott then told him to round up stragglers and send them back to their camps, which caused McClellan to be late to his appointment with Lincoln. McClellan said that he "later explained to President later in the day the cause of my apparent lack of courtesy..."

¹⁴ T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and his Generals*, (New York, Alfred A Knopf, 1952) p.19

¹⁵ T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and his Generals*, (New York, Alfred A Knopf, 1952) p.20

¹⁶ R. Ernest Dupuy, Trevor N. Dupoy, *The Compact History of the Civil War*, (New York, Hawthorn Books Inc., 1960) p.44-47

¹⁷ George B. McClellan, *McClellan's Own Story*, (New York, Charles L. Webster & Company, 1886) p.66

¹⁸ which shows his pride and the joy he had in gaining a level of status that Scott did not have. McClellan saw Lincoln as a person of inferior abilities, which speaks volumes of McClellan's view of himself. He held himself much higher than he should have. This showed in the way that he talked about Lincoln, calling him a "hostile and boring oaf".¹⁹ He was a natural patronizer and often looked down on others. His early promotions at the onset of the war, the fact that his soldiers loved him, and the public's search for a hero only fueled his hubris. Williams argues that if he had some humbling reverses in his early years, he would have been a better general, especially if he met circumstances of potential or even actual defeat in battle.²⁰ On the positive side, he was very affluent in the training of soldiers, and he quickly gained the respect of his soldiers. These positives do not outweigh his negatives though. He had a messianic complex, which showed even in the writings to his wife. He wrote in a letter to her, "my previous life seems, to have been unwittingly directed to this end..."²¹ His confidence would be tested when he went to Lincoln with a plan to quell the rebellion in one blow. He had the idea to amass 273,000 troops to march on Richmond. This plan was defective in many regards according to Williams. It called for a mass concentration in one theatre of war leaving the others neglected. He also failed to realize that the government could not recruit an army of that magnitude quickly and even if they could, it would not be able to house, feed, and transport them.²²

While this was going on in the East, Lincoln was beginning to make plans for the West. He appointed John C. Fremont as the commander of the Western Army. A veteran of the Mexican War, he was much like McClellan in the fact that he was young and charismatic.

¹⁸ *Ibid*

¹⁹ George B. McClellan, *McClellan's Own Story*, (New York, Charles L. Webster & Company, 1886) p.172

²⁰ T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and his Generals*, (New York, Alfred A Knopf, 1952) p.26

²¹ George B. McClellan, *McClellan's Own Story*, (New York, Charles L. Webster & Company, 1886) p.172

²² T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and his Generals*, (New York, Alfred A Knopf, 1952) p.31

Lincoln gave him *carte blanche* in the west and unfortunately Fremont was not a successful general despite his unlimited budget. His military failures were too great, and it cost him his command. These failures included inefficiency of resources; he worked with some unscrupulous weapons contractors and failed to keep supplies plentiful for his troops. His biggest failure was losing a garrison in St. Louis to the Confederates, and thus allowing them to become more active in Missouri. This pained Lincoln and Fremont was removed from command. He was replaced by David Hunter, who would not stay in command long.²³

After the failures in the West, Lincoln turned to the East and to McClellan. He would be in command from October 1861 until November 1862. His career would be marked with fear, political manipulation, inaction, and overall poor leadership. The Senate, along with Lincoln, was pressuring McClellan to move, and McClellan answered accusations of inaction by asking for more time to train troops. He blamed Scott for the political pressure, claiming that it was controlling his young genius and hindering his plans for the Army of the Potomac. He moved to have Scott retired. Scott was willing to retire, but was unwilling to give McClellan his office. Lincoln wrote McClellan on November 1, 1861 naming him to “command the whole army,”²⁴ which was the position of General in Chief. His attitude towards Lincoln remained the same despite his promotion. He had a positive view of Lincoln if Lincoln did not exercise control over him. After his promotion, McClellan then proceeded to name two new generals in the west. He named Henry W. Halleck and Don Carlos Buell to command the two departments in the west. Halleck was charged with concentrating forces in Mississippi after the failures of Fremont, and he told Buell to hold Kentucky.²⁵ Buell was like McClellan but without the charisma. He was

²³ *Ibid*, p.36-38

²⁴ Abraham Lincoln, *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln vol. V*, (Rutgers University Press, 1953) p.9

²⁵ George B. McClellan, *McClellan's Own Story*, (New York, Charles L. Webster & Company, 1886) p.207-210

cold, reserved, and prone to inaction. Lincoln wanted Buell to attack Knoxville the Fall of 1861, but Buell saw that he could not take Eastern Tennessee by invading from the north. He proposed simultaneous movement by his forces along with Halleck's to take Eastern Tennessee. Halleck was to come from Western Kentucky up through the Tennessee and Cumberland rivers while Buell came from Nashville.²⁶ McClellan had a different plan however. He wanted Buell to move to East Tennessee to aid his own operations in Virginia.²⁷ He was planning a campaign against Richmond.

He started his command wanting to advance against Manassas, which was en route to Richmond, but was held up by his own fear and aversion to making key decisions. He had a tendency to overestimate the enemy and see obstacles that were not there. This was his biggest weakness as a soldier, and he tended to make matters worse for himself. One such example is when he hired Allen Pinkerton to gather intelligence on the Confederate forces in Virginia. McClellan was plagued with the worst intelligence service of any general to that point. Pinkerton returned with figures of 80,000-90,000 men in Manassas and 126,000 troops total in Virginia. This intelligence was so poor that McClellan asked Lincoln for more troops in order to delay advancing.²⁸ His excuses for this delay were road conditions, the need for further training of his troops, and Buell not being ready in East Tennessee. He turned the blame on the government, claiming that they were withholding resources from him.²⁹ He wrote to his wife saying "I have a set of men to deal with unscrupulous and false; if possible they will throw whatever blame there

²⁶ T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and his Generals*, (New York, Alfred A Knopf, 1952) p.48-49

²⁷ McClellan to Buell, December 3, 1861, *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, VII, (Washington, 1880-1901) p.467

²⁸ T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and his Generals*, (New York, Alfred A Knopf, 1952) p.50

²⁹ T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and his Generals*, (New York, Alfred A Knopf, 1952) p.51

is on my shoulders, and I do not intend to be sacrificed by such people.”³⁰ His master plan was to capture Richmond without fighting a battle. He wanted to transport his troops by water down the Potomac River and the Chesapeake Bay to the mouth of the Rappahannock River, then land at Urbana which was northeast of Richmond. He would then attack Richmond before the troops at Manassas could return.³¹

He did not tell Lincoln about this plan, but in December of 1861 Lincoln wrote McClellan with a plan of his own. He wanted a joint frontal and flank attack at Manassas.³² McClellan disapproved of the plan, but took the hint and told Lincoln about the Urbana scheme. He initially wanted to move immediately but the weather turned bad, and he became ill with typhoid fever. He actually had a legitimate excuse for a delay this time. While he was ill, Lincoln began to coordinate a joint movement with Buell and Halleck. He wanted Halleck and Buell to move on Bowling Green³³ but Halleck lacked the resources. Lincoln wanted to move on Knoxville but they could not work together effectively.

McClellan pressured Buell and Halleck to do something soon. He told them that he was feeling great pressure from the government for an advance and that he needed to coordinate one soon. He wrote Halleck the same thing.³⁴ Lincoln proposed that Halleck attack the confederate forces in western Kentucky while Buell menaced Eastern Kentucky and Eastern Tennessee.³⁵ Buell did eventually attack Eastern Kentucky and gained a victory at Mill Springs but could not advance after that. Halleck then decided to attack Fort Henry with Grant’s forces. He failed to

³⁰ George B. McClellan, *McClellan’s Own Story*, (New York, Charles L. Webster & Company, 1886) p.176-177

³¹ *Ibid* p.202-203

³² Abraham Lincoln, *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln vol. V*, (Rutgers University Press, 1953) p.34

³³ Abraham Lincoln, *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln vol. V*, (Rutgers University Press, 1953) p.84

³⁴ McClellan to Buell, January 13, 1862, *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, VII*, (Washington, 1880-1901) p.547

³⁵ Abraham Lincoln, *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln vol. V*, (Rutgers University Press, 1953) p.98-99

inform Buell of this attack until he needed his troops for a diversion. Buell made excuses not to aid him and moved toward Nashville instead. Grant gained the victory not only at Fort Henry but at Fort Donelson as well, but Halleck tried to claim all of the credit for this victory. Grant was promoted to major general, and Lincoln began to take an interest in Grant.³⁶ At this point, very little has been accomplished in the East. In the West, there are traces of victory coming from Grant. Lincoln begins to watch Grant with great interest, which will contrast his displeasure that he will feel with McClellan.

The rest of McClellan's military career was plagued with mistakes, namely due to bad intelligence and lack of action. There are several instances where this is the case. In February of 1862, Lincoln wrote General War Order Number One, with the purpose getting McClellan to take action. The winter months were unproductive; no strikes were made and no offensives were executed. McClellan brought back up the Urbana Plan, and Lincoln eventually yielded. Williams argues that Lincoln made a mistake going with a plan that he distrusted; he should have asked McClellan to draft another plan or he simply should have relieved him of command. McClellan could have taken Manassas and regained Lincoln's trust but he decided to fight for a plan that Lincoln, Halleck, and the Senate objected. This showed McClellan's inability to lead and work with others.³⁷ McClellan moved forward with the Urbana plan but received discouraging news on March 9, 1862. The news that came to him was that the Confederates had evacuated Manassas and Centreville and retreated. This made his Urbana Plan useless because this put the Confederate defenses behind the Rappahannock. He marched his troops out and occupied the abandoned positions.³⁸ Lincoln took this opportunity to relieve McClellan as

³⁶ T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and his Generals*, (New York, Alfred A Knopf, 1952) p.59-60

³⁷ T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and his Generals*, (New York, Alfred A Knopf, 1952) p.66

³⁸ T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and his Generals*, (New York, Alfred A Knopf, 1952) p.70

general in chief, but he retained him as leader of the Army of the Potomac. Lincoln said that McClellan could earn back his office if he captured Richmond.³⁹ This is an interesting move by Lincoln. He grew tired of McClellan's inaction and failures, yet retained him in a position of command. This shows that part of Lincoln still had faith in McClellan, but the other parts of him were cautious. He kept McClellan very close to him so that he could observe him more closely, hoping that McClellan would do better with a more focused position of command, without the political strife. Lincoln would eventually have his worst fears regarding McClellan realized.

While this was going on, things began stirring in the West. Halleck began moving Grant's troops up the Tennessee river, and because he had not received correspondence from Grant was about to relieve him from duty. Grant had gone and joined up with Buell without his permission. This culminated at the Battle of Shiloh, which almost ended in Grant's defeat. He was able to repel the confederates with aid from Buell. Grant made a grave error in relying on his enemy to do what he wanted, which was to wait for him to attack. He was successful, however, and Lincoln took notice saying that he couldn't lose Grant because he was a fighter.⁴⁰

In April of 1862, McClellan began a siege on Yorktown instead of attacking outright. He had superior numbers, and could have broken through the lines and driven up the Peninsula but decided to implement a siege that lasted a month and gave the confederates a chance to regroup. When he did plan an invasion of Yorktown, he wanted to take it with the aid of the Navy and flank them from the river. When he arrived at Fortress Monroe, he found out that the navy could not cooperate, so he decided to send McDowell and his forces up the north side but McDowell was detained in Washington. When the month was over he was ready to attack, but the

³⁹ Abraham Lincoln, *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln vol. V*, (Rutgers University Press, 1953) p.155

⁴⁰ T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and his Generals*, (New York, Alfred A Knopf, 1952) p.70

Confederates held him back until May 5th when they fell back up the peninsula.⁴¹ This began his slow movement towards Richmond, meeting little resistance because Joseph Johnston wanted a decisive battle for Richmond. This is when McClellan's famous nervousness came back into play. He once again overestimated the forces, and was not pleased with the forces he received from McDowell.⁴² Jackson caught wind of McClellan's reinforcements and moved towards Washington beating back Fremont's army. Lincoln had to bring McDowell back to Washington to defend it, much to the chagrin of McClellan.⁴³ Lincoln planned to use McDowell and Fremont to capture Jackson and end the assault on Washington. While they were able to push back Jackson's forces, they were unable to capture him. Lincoln's plan failed and the confederate plan to stop McDowell from reaching McClellan succeeded. While this was happening, McClellan was moving towards Richmond. He was attacked on May 31 and June 1 of 1862 at the Chickahominy.

The Battle of Seven Pines drove back federal forces but McClellan was able to bring them back over the north side and regain the lost ground. This battle almost ruined him as a general according to Williams. He writes that this battle revealed another weakness of his, he loved his soldiers too much.⁴⁴ McClellan wrote to his wife describing the battlefield and how it sickened him with its "mangled corpses" and "screaming wounded."⁴⁵ When McClellan received word that Jackson was receiving 10,000 reinforcements from Richmond, Lincoln told him to attack Richmond. McClellan did not attack because he received word that Jackson reinforced Richmond with 200,000 troops but this was another example of bad intelligence. This delay led

⁴¹ T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and his Generals*, (New York, Alfred A Knopf, 1952) p.91

⁴² T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and his Generals*, (New York, Alfred A Knopf, 1952) p.92-95

⁴³ Abraham Lincoln, *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln vol. V*, (Rutgers University Press, 1953) p.232

⁴⁴ T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and his Generals*, (New York, Alfred A Knopf, 1952) p.101-106

⁴⁵ George B. McClellan, *McClellan's Own Story*, (New York, Charles L. Webster & Company, 1886) p.398

to the Union being attacked by an all-out offensive. McClellan was able to repel the offensive, yet he did not attack Richmond. On the second day, Lee forced McClellan back to the James. The third day resulted in McClellan repelling Lee, but McClellan did not counterattack. His reason for not attacking was that he claimed his state of mind, not being in an offensive state after the battle, thought that he was fighting an enemy that was twice his size and that he needed massive numbers of reinforcements. He accused the government of sacrificing the Potomac.⁴⁶ This was around the time that Halleck was named general in chief and his first order was for McClellan to take Richmond. Due to the fact that McClellan needed more reinforcements than they could spare, Lincoln and Halleck pulled him back to the James. The Union would not reach Richmond until 1864. This is another prime example of McClellan's inaction that was caused by fear.

The end of McClellan's career was due to his slow progress. After the failure of John Pope at Manassas, he began to pressure Halleck more. Manassas began when Lee pursued McClellan after he pulled back and met Pope's forces at Manassas. McClellan was placed in charge of reinforcements for Pope. Pope was able to repel the confederate army, but was overrun when he pursued them.⁴⁷ Pope had the faults of McClellan but in reverse according to Williams. He underestimated enemy forces and was too brash in his offensive maneuvers.⁴⁸ Pope blamed McClellan for his defeat because he thought that McClellan held back reinforcements. Lincoln decided that McClellan was not at fault. Lincoln then proceeded to relieve Pope of command on September 5. Lincoln wanted to appoint Burnside as General of the Army of the Potomac but he

⁴⁶ George B. McClellan, *McClellan's Own Story*, (New York, Charles L. Webster & Company, 1886) p.424

⁴⁷ R. Ernest Dupuy, Trevor N. Dupuy, *The Compact History of the Civil War*, (New York, Hawthorn Books Inc., 1960) p.148-152

⁴⁸ T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and his Generals*, (New York, Alfred A Knopf, 1952) p.158

refused the command, forcing Lincoln to give the role to McClellan. McClellan met Lee at Antietam, and should have destroyed him. All he had to do was move rapidly and interpose Lee and Jackson's lines and separate them. He waited too long and when he reached Antietam, Lee was ready for him. He had an opportunity to gain ultimate victory; all he had to do was attack them before they could cross the creek. He decided to attack them from the left, then the right, then right up the center if the first two succeeded. The left flank was successful and he was on the verge of victory but he did not send in the reserve force on the right and did not cover the retreat. Victory was in his grasp and he could have ended the war, yet he chose to hold back.⁴⁹ McClellan did not pursue him across the Potomac until after November of 1862, which was too late for him. Lincoln relieved him of command on November 7, 1862.⁵⁰ McClellan would not hold military command for the rest of the war. McClellan's failure was of his own doing. He did not listen to Lincoln's calls to advance, and his fear led to his inaction. This would be the case for the Union Army for the rest of 1862 and even into the first half of 1863.

Three more generals would be removed before July of 1863. Ambrose E. Burnside replaced McClellan and was in command until December of 1862. His failure at Fredericksburg was his undoing. He wanted a decisive battle there on confederate soil but this proved to be disastrous. He never gained any ground and was forced backwards towards Manassas as a result. After the loss, he asked to be removed. He was replaced by Joseph Hooker.⁵¹

Before this, Buell was relieved because the confederates invaded Kentucky and Buell was forced to leave Tennessee. His slow movement was his undoing as well. He was granted one final chance at Perryville but that battle ended in a draw. He was officially relieved of command

⁴⁹ T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and his Generals*, (New York, Alfred A Knopf, 1952) p.166-168

⁵⁰ Abraham Lincoln, *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln vol. V*, (Rutgers University Press, 1953) p.485-486

⁵¹ T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and his Generals*, (New York, Alfred A Knopf, 1952) p.199-206

in October of 1862.⁵² Grant at this time began his assault on Vicksburg. In January of 1863, he tried to take it multiple times and each time he failed. He tried various means like moving from Memphis through Mississippi, digging canals across the peninsula on the opposite side of Vicksburg, invading from the north, having the Navy ascend through the Red River, and entering through Mississippi. All these plans failed, so he took the rest of the winter to plan his next assault. He used the time to dig canals and implement small raids to keep the enemy busy while he planned his offensive.⁵³ In April of 1863, Grant moved toward his objective. He planned to have his Navy run past Vicksburg's batteries and proceed to a point below the city. If they made it safely, then Grant would meet them on the west bank and have them transport troops to the east side. By April 30, he was ready to strike. He was supposed to receive reinforcement from Nathaniel P. Banks, but Banks moved on Port Hudson instead and insisted that Grant join him. He wrote, "The only course for me, failing in co-operation with you, is to regain the Mississippi and attack Port Hudson, or to move against the enemy at Shreveport. Port Hudson is reduced in force, but not as you are informed. It has now 10,000 men, and is very strongly fortified."⁵⁴ Grant moved on Vicksburg and defeated the enemy forces that intercepted him. He laid siege to Vicksburg, and success was promising. During this ordeal one of his officers, John A. McClernand, gave false reports about Grant and how he effected a lodgment in the enemy works and decided to delay action until the siege ended. He was jealous of Grant and was convinced that the river victory was his doing. He decided to write an address saying that his corps had

⁵² T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and his Generals*, (New York, Alfred A Knopf, 1952) p.183-185

⁵³ T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and his Generals*, (New York, Alfred A Knopf, 1952) p.224

⁵⁴ Banks to Grant, May 12, *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, XXIV, pt.3 (Washington, 1880-1901) p.298

done the most fighting in the recent movements and deserved the credit. Grant caught wind of this and, with permission from Lincoln, relieved him of command.⁵⁵

Meanwhile in the East, Hooker was planning his spring campaign. He proposed an attack to destroy confederate supply lines in Virginia. Lincoln approved this plan, but it ultimately failed due to April rains in Virginia. He then drafted a new plan; he would threaten Lee's left by attacking Fredericksburg and by applying pressure to Lee he would either destroy their communications or force him to retreat. He moved on Fredericksburg on May 1; all he had to do was keep moving and crush the confederate line between his superior forces. Like McClellan and Burnside before him, however, he began to lose his nerve. Lee answered his advance with an attack from the west, and forced Hooker back towards Chancellorsville. On May 2, the confederates assaulted Chancellorsville.⁵⁶ Hooker was in good position at the end of the day, and if he counterattacked he might still have won. He instead decided to fall back against the river, which allowed Lee to unite his forces. He was injured on May 3 when a cannon shot hit a porch he was standing on causing a pillar to fall. After this injury, he ordered the army to retreat to the north side of the river. After the failure in Chancellorsville, Hooker wanted to move across the Rappahannock and attack Lee at Fredericksburg. In June of 1863, Lee began his movement that would culminate at Gettysburg. Hooker petitioned Lincoln to let him attack Fredericksburg, but his plan was flawed. He wanted to meet the army in order to destroy a rear unit of little consequence. He wanted to sacrifice his main objective for a minor one. After Lincoln denied his plan, he decided to move on Richmond instead.⁵⁷ Lincoln wanted him to focus on defeating Lee,

⁵⁵ T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and his Generals*, (New York, Alfred A Knopf, 1952) p.230-231

⁵⁶ T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and his Generals*, (New York, Alfred A Knopf, 1952) p.234-239

⁵⁷ *Ibid* p.251-253

not capturing Richmond.⁵⁸ Hooker, like McClellan, saw Richmond as the way to end the war. They did not see that if they destroyed Lee, they essentially destroyed the Confederate Army. Lincoln had this insight early, but his generals did not. Hooker eventually yielded, but as he advanced he began to become nervous again. Much like McClellan he was afraid to attack Lee, so much so that he asked to be relieved of command.⁵⁹ Lincoln relieved him and placed Meade in his stead.

The analysis of Union generals from 1861 to July of 1863 can be summed up in a few ideas. First, there was a great deal of inner conflict within the Union Army. McClellan was at odds with Lincoln most of his career. Grant had issues with other officers like Halleck, McClellan and Banks. Hooker was reluctant to listen to Lincoln and all of the generals that lost their command at one point or another acted in their own interests and plans instead of listening to Lincoln. Second, fear and inactivity was the downfall of many of these generals. McClellan, Hooker, Fremont, Burnside, and Hooker all suffered from the same weakness, fear. They were inactive because they were afraid of failure and this cost the Union dearly and extended the war as a consequence. Poor intelligence, poor strategy, and pride were other factors but they all stemmed from the same root cause, which was fear. The Union unfortunately did not realize this until July of 1863, when the Battle of Gettysburg took place. The Confederates had advanced so far that morale was low, and the cause seemed futile. However, this is when Union leadership flourished and began to turn. In order to understand how bad the Union leadership was at this time, one must contrast these leaders with the Confederate leaders of this time; leaders like Jackson, Lee, Longstreet, and others. One key difference will be apparent upfront. These leaders

⁵⁸ Abraham Lincoln, *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln vol. VI*, (Rutgers University Press, 1953) p.249

⁵⁹ Hooker to Halleck, June 27, 1863, *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, ser.1 XXVII, pt.1* (Washington, 1880-1901) p.60

were not afraid to take risks and not afraid to lose. This will show in the lives and careers of these generals.

Section 2: Confederate Leaders before Gettysburg.

One of the first confederate generals of note was Peter Beauregard. He was responsible for the victory at Fort Sumter, which started the war. He was a veteran of the Mexican War, and when the confederacy began, he wrote General Robert Anderson demanding that Sumter be evacuated saying that if they did not evacuate that he would fire on them. Anderson refused writing, “I regret that my sense of honor and my obligations to my Government prevent my compliance.”⁶⁰ Beauregard answered this letter giving them a second chance to evacuate stating, “If you will state the time at which you will evacuate Fort Sumter and agree that, in the meanwhile, you will not use your guns against us, unless ours shall be employed against Fort Sumter, we will abstain from opening fire on you.”⁶¹ Anderson did not comply and Beauregard had his officers write him on April 12, 1861 saying that within the hour they would fire on Ft. Sumter. Beauregard recalls the event, describing the batteries that fired on Sumter, explaining that they fired steadily throughout the day but slowed it during the night.⁶² On April 13, he opened a vigorous volley on the fort and they won the day.⁶³ At the beginning of June 1861, Beauregard was in Richmond with Lee and Jefferson Davis keeping tabs with Johnston who was at Harper’s Ferry at the time. On June 5th, he assumed command at the Manassas Gap railroad junction and led a regiment there. A southern newspaper wrote this about him. It said, “the Leading characteristic of General Beauregard’s mind is clearness and perception.”⁶⁴ He was

⁶⁰ William P. Snow, *Lee and his Generals*, (New York, The Fairfax Press, 1867) p.219

⁶¹ William P. Snow, *Lee and his Generals*, (New York, The Fairfax Press, 1867) p.220

⁶² *Ibid* p.220

⁶³ William P. Snow, *Lee and his Generals*, (New York, The Fairfax Press, 1867) p.222-223

⁶⁴ William P. Snow, *Southern Generals: Their Lives and Campaigns*, (New York, C.B. Richardson, 1866) p.216

involved in the First Bull Run along with Johnston. He was mainly a supporting general, in charge of reinforcements. His expertise aided Johnston and Jackson in their victory at Bull Run. He then petitioned Davis to allow him to advance on Washington, but Davis denied him. Early in 1862, after the confederacy evacuated Manassas, Beauregard was reassigned to the Dept. of Mississippi.⁶⁵ He was in Nashville by February 3rd and shortly after assumed command in Mississippi. He received notice that Grant had attacked Pittsburg. He sent his army to combat Grant at Shiloh, and the results for Beauregard were disastrous. The battle seemed to be going in their favor, until Buell arrived with reinforcements. Braxton Bragg was in charge of making sure that Buell's reinforcements did not arrive by the river, and when he failed to do so the battle was chaotic. Steamers brought in Union troops until there were 23,000 new troops on the field for the Union. On the second day of the Battle of Shiloh, Beauregard had a renewed sense of confidence, he thought that he could end the battle and destroy the western Union army that day. He expected the Union soldiers to have evacuated downriver overnight, but Grant had not. Beauregard was met with reinforcements and was pushed back. The Confederates lost all progress that day.⁶⁶ Commander Albert Johnson was killed in the ensuing battle, and Beauregard assumed command of Johnson's forces. After this, Halleck and Pope began to move towards New Orleans, and would pass through Corinth on the way. Beauregard fell back to Corinth to regroup. On May 30th, with Halleck's forces close to Corinth, he evacuated his troops from Corinth. This was a controversial decision and was met with scrutiny. A writer at the time thought that if Halleck did attack then he would have been destroyed. Beauregard had Corinth well-fortified and could have defended against him but he did not.⁶⁷ Beauregard then turned over

⁶⁵ William P. Snow, *Lee and his Generals*, (New York, The Fairfax Press, 1867) p.238

⁶⁶ Winston Groom and Chris Howland. 2012. "Beauregard's Rude Awakening at Shiloh." *America's Civil War* 25, no.2:42, p.47-49

⁶⁷ William P. Snow, *Lee and his Generals*, (New York, The Fairfax Press, 1867) p.250

his command to Bragg for health reasons and took a command position in Charleston until 1864. He was in charge of the defense of Charleston and command of the forces therein. Beauregard was a prime example of a great general from a previous war that did not meet the expectations set in this war. Despite this, he was a successful general because he was willing to take risks and was not afraid to engage the enemy. The Union could not say the same thing at this time.

Another general that was at Bull Run was a man by the name of Thomas Jackson, known more famously as “Stonewall” Jackson. This battle is where he became a legend. He formed his brigade on the northeastern side of the Henry House Hill, to cover the retreat of Southern troops. His army repelled the Union forces in pursuit. This is where Barnard Bee’s famous quote comes from, “There stands Jackson like a stone wall.” The Confederacy was victorious that day.⁶⁸ Jackson’s wife recorded his account of the battle, saying the troops were panicking. They rode to Jackson saying that the Union was beating them back, and Jackson told them to “give them the bayonet.” She wrote that his “cool reply showed the unconquered mind of one who never knew that he was beaten.”⁶⁹ He was briefly given command of Harper’s Ferry in May 1861, but that command was relinquished to Johnston. He was promoted to brigadier general shortly after and began his campaign into the Shenendoah Valley. He met Shields along the Potomac and had to evacuate Winchester in order to reinforce Johnston. On May 15, he began marching back towards Winchester. He defeated the Union troops at Front Royal and moved towards Winchester, eventually capturing it on May 26.⁷⁰ He was swift and tenacious in his campaign, giving up no ground and pushing the enemy back. He was pivotal in the victory of the Seven

⁶⁸ R. Ernest Dupuy, Trevor N. Dupuy, *The Compact History of the Civil War*, (New York, Hawthorn Books Inc., 1960) p.148-151

⁶⁹ Mary Anna Jackson, *The Life and Letters of “Stonewall” Jackson by his Wife*, (New York, Harper and Brothers, 1891) p.178

⁷⁰ Addey Markinfield, *Stonewall Jackson: The Life and Military Career of Thomas Jonathon Jackson*, (Sciute Mass, 2001) p.187-190

Days battle when he joined up with Lee to push back McClellan. He seemed to thrive under independent command, which showed when he routed Pope at the Second Battle of Manassas. He was nearly defeated when his Stonewall Brigade was overrun, but he sent in reinforcements from A.P. Hill and repelled the advance.⁷¹ This battle ended in victory for the Confederacy.

When Lee reorganized the Army of Northern Virginia in 1862, Jackson was promoted to Lieutenant General. His next major battle would be at Fredericksburg, on Dec. 13. He was in charge of the right and held his position aiding the confederate victory.⁷² As the confederates pushed north, they arrived at Chancellorsville, which would prove to be Jackson's final battle. On May 1, 1863, Jackson arrived at Chancellorsville. After Hooker retreated behind the river, they began to advance. On May 2, Jackson's foot cavalry disappeared into the woods and attacked the Union right. His wagon train was briefly endangered but he dispatched two regiments to defend it and it got through unscathed. By the end of the day, he came down upon the Union line. As night fell, he hoped to cut off Hooker from his communications with the Rappahannock. As he was riding, he was shot by a North Carolina regiment mistaking him for a federal cavalry detachment.⁷³ Mrs. Jackson writes about this stating that he was riding with great enthusiasm and as he was fired upon, he told a soldier "there is no danger" and to "go back and tell General Hill to press on," This is when he was shot.⁷⁴ He died of his wounds four days later. Jackson was a different kind of general. He displayed the characteristics of leadership that the Union had only seen in Grant at this point. He was strong, steadfast, willing to take risks, and yet

⁷¹ Ezra J. Warner, *Generals in Gray: Lives of the Confederate Commanders*, (Louisiana State University Press, 1959) p.152

⁷² *Ibid*

⁷³ R. Ernest Dupuy, Trevor N. Dupoy, *The Compact History of the Civil War*, (New York, Hawthorn Books Inc., 1960) p.204-207

⁷⁴ Mary Anna Jackson, *The Life and Letters of "Stonewall" Jackson by his Wife*, (New York, Harper and Brothers, 1891) p.441

loved his men. He was willing to do whatever it took to attain victory, and his death was very costly for the Confederates.

Now the most famous of the Confederate Generals is Robert E. Lee. He is known for his military genius, brilliant tactics, and tenacity during his career as a general. He was one of the few southern leaders to receive a generalship at the beginning of the war without actually fighting. He provided military advising to Jefferson Davis and was very successful on the battlefield. One interesting fact is that the main reason he joined the Confederacy was his loyalty to his home state of Virginia. When Virginia seceded, he joined the Confederate Army.⁷⁵ Lee wrote “Save in defense of my native state, I never desire again to draw my sword.”⁷⁶ He would indeed have to draw his sword as it were, and in defense of his home state as Virginia would become a major battleground in the war. One of his first acts as an officer was to fortify Arlington Heights. The purpose of this was to make sure this central part of Virginia was safe, but the main task for Lee was to train the Southern troops for war.⁷⁷ After the events of Bull Run, Lee was sent to the West for a time to replace General Richard Garnett after his death. He was sent there to drive the Union out and march back into Northwest Virginia. This plan failed, so Lee moved towards the Kanawha region to reinforce the Confederate generals there and drive the Union back to the western borders of Virginia. This did not happen until October of 1861, when Lee was able to push the Union forces back toward Ohio, yet he was unable to pursue them due to road conditions.⁷⁸ When McClellan was closing in on Richmond, Lee began to devise a defensive strategy. His time of ultimate command was drawing near on the day of the Battle of

⁷⁵ Ezra J. Warner, *Generals in Gray: Lives of the Confederate Commanders*, (Louisiana State University Press, 1959) p.180

⁷⁶ William P. Snow, *Lee and his Generals*, (New York, The Fairfax Press, 1867) p.36-37

⁷⁷ William P. Snow, *Lee and his Generals*, (New York, The Fairfax Press, 1867) p.45

⁷⁸ William P. Snow, *Lee and his Generals*, (New York, The Fairfax Press, 1867) p.48-49

Seven Pines. Johnston attacked the Union forces but was injured during the retreat after McClellan's troops arrived. The outcome of Seven Pines was not in favor of the Confederates; the Union had maintained their ground and hope seemed lost for the Confederates. This is when Jefferson Davis named Lee commander in chief and commander of the Army of Northern Virginia. He gave a speech that in essence stated that this was the final retreat and everyone's phrase should be "Victory or Death."⁷⁹ This is when things began, ever so slowly, to change for Lee. He hatched a plan to bring Jackson down on the Union's left flank, and to trick McClellan into thinking that he was planning to invade Maryland by way of Harper's Ferry and advance towards Washington. This is a prime example of his tenacity, he was willing to sacrifice anything for victory.

In order to do this, Lee needed to make some changes in order to increase effectiveness and morale. One important thing that Lee did was reorganize his army. He removed their camps from the swamps and placed them in healthy situations, he made sure that supplies were plentiful and wholesome, and listened to his men. Dissatisfaction and mutiny was almost eliminated completely from his ranks. On June 26, Jackson arrived at Ashland and began his movements towards the Chickahominy River. He quickly encountered Union forces, drove them back, and continued his march towards Mechanicsville. The Union was heavily fortified there and they were unable to overcome their forces.⁸⁰

One of Lee's biggest victories was his defense of Richmond in late June and early July of 1862. On June 28th and 29th, he was successful in driving back McClellan with aid of Jackson. He also cut off supplies for McClellan that were arriving from Washington. On June 30th,

⁷⁹ *Ibid* p.55

⁸⁰ *Ibid* p.57-59

Jackson crossed the Chickahominy and met the Union forces at Williamsburg. A long artillery fight ensued and the federals fell back once again. Lee was on the field for this battle, pushing his men forward and encouraging them to advance. On July 1st, he oversaw the pursuit of the Union and a bloody battle at Malvern Hill ensued. His losses were heavy and victory was not obtained, but he was successful in driving back the Union from the Confederate capital.⁸¹ His defense of Richmond would be remembered as a great example of his leadership prowess and military genius.

The next major conflict that Lee would participate in was the Second Battle of Manassas. This took place after Jackson successfully invaded from behind the Union lines and pushing them back towards Manassas. Batteries were placed between Jackson's and Longstreet's lines right in the center where Lee was. Artillery fire began the conflict, but the real conflict came in the afternoon of August 30, 1862. Lee sent Jackson to rake the enemy, which resulted in Jackson breaking lines several times and rallying several times as well. As they fell back towards Manassas, the Union pursued them. This is when the Confederate artillery opened fire on them, and after a few Union rallies they began to give way. Jackson and Longstreet attacked from both sides and Lee came up through the center. They pushed the Union back and once the Union destroyed the bridge on the edge of Manassas, the pursuit ended. The Confederates were victorious.⁸² This was another famous example of Lee's military genius.

The next stage of the war showed Lee's military genius and his thirst for the capture of Maryland. His invasion of Harper's Ferry and his assault on Washington proved to be risky maneuvers. He was unable to take Washington, but he gave no ground after the battle was over.

⁸¹ William P. Snow, *Lee and his Generals*, (New York, The Fairfax Press, 1867) p.64-66

⁸² R. Ernest Dupuy, Trevor N. Dupoy, *The Compact History of the Civil War*, (New York, Hawthorn Books Inc., 1960) p.148-151

This brought the conflict to Antietam Creek, where Lee met McClellan for the bloodiest battle of the war. The stakes were high, McClellan's forces outnumbered their forces 86,000 to 40,000 and if they lost the end of the war was a potential concern for them. The battle began at dawn on September 17, 1862. Lee first met resistance from Hooker on his left. They were pushed back to Dunker Church, but they rebounded when reinforcements arrived though at heavy costs. The slaughter continued throughout the day, the Confederates held their line until noon when they were pushed back. There was a hole in their lines that the Union tried to capitalize on, but Lee sent Hill to fill that gap. They held their ground until ammunition reserves became scarce, and they retreated back across the creek. They were not pursued and because of this, reinforcements were able to arrive and push Burnside back to the starting point. No ground was gained or given.⁸³

After the stalemate of Antietam, Lee faced a new danger. Burnside was beginning to move again towards Richmond through Fredericksburg. The battle that ensued, much like the events that Jackson encountered above, resulted in the defense of Fredericksburg and the retreat of the Union. As the confederacy pursued the Union, they came upon the place of Lee's finest hour, Chancellorsville. When the Union met the Confederacy at Chancellorsville on May 1, 1863 a bloody battle ensued. Hooker pushed with great intensity the day before and had made great strides. Then he came upon five confederate divisions. Hooker was forced to retreat and Lee pursued immediately. He created a line that was two and a half miles wide and sent Jackson to attack their right flank. By the end of May 2, Jackson had routed the enemy and began pursuing them. Lee was holding the field when he received word that Jackson had fallen. On May 3, he renewed the attack and pushed back Union forces. The battle moved into May 4, but it mostly

⁸³ Ted Alexander. 1997. "The Battle of Antietam." Cobblestone 18, no. 7: 4. MasterFILE Premier, EBSCOhost (accessed March 13, 2015).

consisted of the pursuit of the Union away from Chancellorsville.⁸⁴ This was his finest hour, because at his point he had the Union in full retreat. This would be the only part of the war where he would have this much control of the momentum of the war. Lee had lost one of his best generals in this battle, and he knew that this would change things. This is when he began his Pennsylvania campaign. He marched north without much resistance and came to the place that would change the course of the war, Gettysburg Pennsylvania.

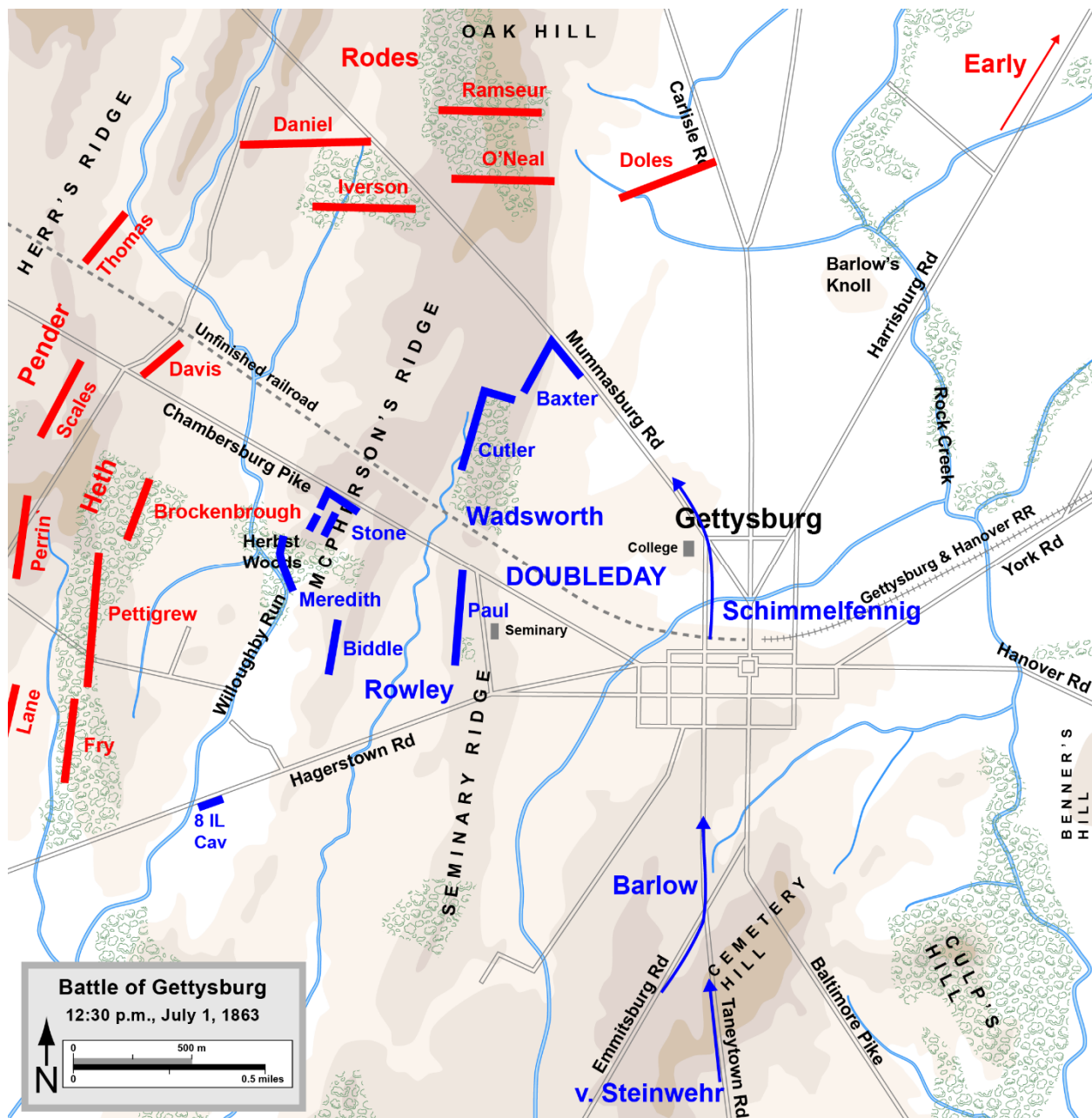
The confederate generals of note before Gettysburg had a few common traits. They were strong in the face of danger, and never wavered. They fought until the battle was over and were quick to capitalize on advantages that were presented to them. Jackson and Lee especially exemplified this skill. They had the opposite traits of McClellan, Burnside, and Hooker. They fought, kept calm in the face of danger, and made sure that they gave their all even in the midst of defeat. There was no quarrel of note between generals and that increased effectiveness. Lee would carry this ideal into Gettysburg, and this is also when the Union realized that they needed strong leaders that emulated the traits of Lee and Jackson. They would find those traits in Meade, Grant, and Sherman but not until after this major event.

Section 3: The Battle of Gettysburg

As the confederates were closing in on Gettysburg, Lincoln had just appointed General George Meade as the Commander of the Army of the Potomac. Lee had stopped three quarters of a mile away from Gettysburg on June 26, 1863. The battle did not start until July 1, 1863. The first day's key players on the Union side were Generals John Buford, John F. Reynolds, Lysander Cutler, Rufus Dawes, and Abner Doubleday. The major players on the Confederate

⁸⁴R. Ernest Dupuy, Trevor N. Dupoy, *The Compact History of the Civil War*, (New York, Hawthorn Books Inc., 1960) p.203-207

side were John Blair, James Longstreet, Alfred Iverson, Robert Rodes, and Julius Daniel. The battle would take place around McPherson's Ridge, Chambersburg Pike, and end at Cemetery Hill outside of Gettysburg. The first day was mainly a day that Meade and Lee took to observe each other's tactics. Ground was neither gained nor lost for both sides and casualties were minimal.



The day began with General John Buford arriving at Gettysburg. The confederates thought that the Union had arrived with only a small force, so they resorted to flanking movements complimented by frontal assaults. The Union answered the assault with cannon fire but pressure became too great and Buford fell back towards McPherson's ridge. General John F. Reynolds soon arrived, and ordered Buford to hold the line. Norman Hall, around 10:45, opened fire which allowed the troops led by Lysander Cutler to arrive in formation.⁸⁵ He was the first to arrive with two regiments from New York and he was placed there in order to cover McPhersons Ridge and to provide protection for Hall's left flank. Reynolds then ordered Howard to move forward, which revealed his determination for an open battle but also his fear of the confederate forces. This is when, according to Coddington, the first crisis of the battle took place. The major concern was whether Reynolds could hold the line on his own or not. Cutler's men barely had time to deploy before the Confederates advanced into easy musket range. A major volley ensued, and Reynolds was killed. The Union was able to push them into the woods, but they were met with resistance on Cutler's right flank. The timely charge of the 2nd Wisconsin allowed them to roll back the right flank of James Archer and eventually was able to devastate his forces and take a good number of his soldiers as prisoners of war.⁸⁶ Despite this success, Cutler was still facing major troubles. His 1st Division was at risk of losing if he did not receive assistance immediately. General Rufus Dawes arrived with this help. He started from the left flank and ran his troops along the depression between Seminary Ridge and McPherson's Ridge towards Chambersburg Pike. The confederates tried to repulse them with a volley from railroad cover but that proved disastrous. Cutler with his troops from the 95th New York joined up with Dawes and then jumped the fence, laying crossfire against the confederates that led to the surrender of the 2nd Mississippi

⁸⁵ Edwin B. Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign: A Study in Command*, (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968) p. 266-268

⁸⁶ *Ibid* p. 269-271

led by Major John Blair.⁸⁷ The events of the morning rapidly reached Meade. He heard of Reynolds' death and the small victories of Cutler and Dawes. This is when he changed his plans entirely. He only sent troops to Gettysburg to scout a battlefield, he never anticipated conflict. He ordered a concentration of his army there and sent Winfield Scott Hancock to deliver his plans and to assume a place of command. Hancock had seen his plans and Meade believed that he was a capable officer. Hancock rode out for Gettysburg at 1:30 p.m.⁸⁸ At 2:30 p.m. the fighting resumed, when Robert Rodes' long lines of infantry emerged from the woods at Oak Hill. Gen. Abner Doubleday, who assumed command after Reynolds was killed, extended his line across Mummasburg Road and opened fire along Fairfield Road. During this conflict, they pushed their line out into the railroad cut, only to be pushed back to their former position. This happened several times throughout the skirmish. While this was going on, Rodes began making his final preparations for his attack. He placed George Doles' troops to the right of Middletown Road in the valley, and marched against the enemy. Things quickly dissolved and fell apart, however. A fatal error was that Alfred Iverson had not led his troops in person. This left his left flank exposed, and the Union was able to come in and capture a majority of the uninjured soldiers in Iverson's brigade.⁸⁹ This is when General George Gordon was ordered to support Doles. He rode within nine hundred feet of the Union lines and using effective shock tactics, he attacked the First Brigade of the Union and forced them to retreat towards Cemetery Hill. General Early had arrived at this point and Coddington writes that this "advance could not have been better synchronized if Lee had been in position to issue all orders to his commanders at once."⁹⁰ Meanwhile, Cutler was meeting resistance from Julius Daniel. Cutler's men fought him savagely

⁸⁷ *Ibid* p. 271-272

⁸⁸ Edwin B. Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign: A Study in Command*, (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968) p. 284-285

⁸⁹ *Ibid* p. 286-290

⁹⁰ *Ibid* p.292

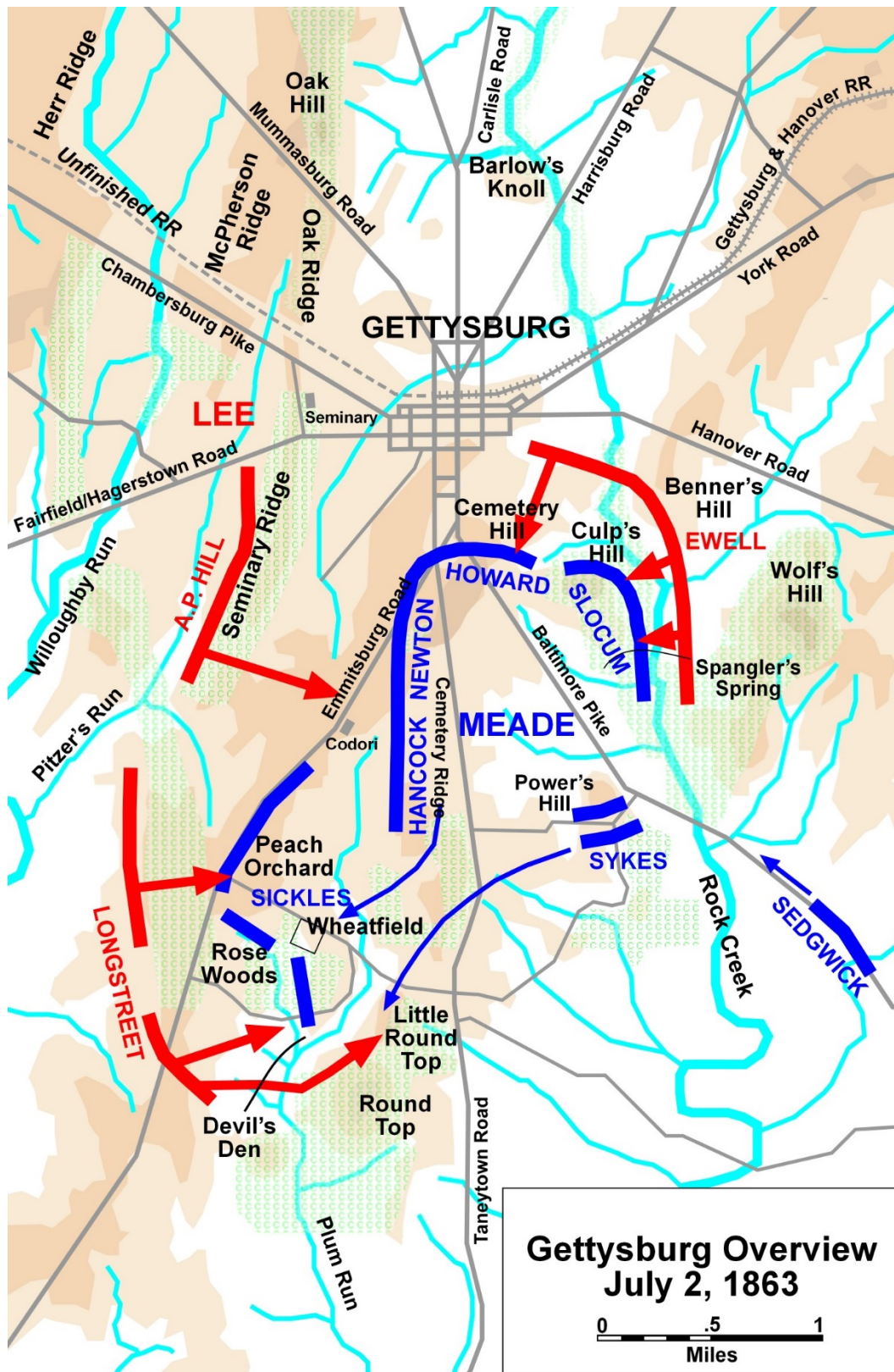
and skillfully, inflicting heavy losses and forcing him back. The confederacy then increased pressure and forced the Union to make a final stand at Seminary Ridge. They took advantage of the barricade that the fences provided and fought back. Their line collapsed, however, and they were forced to retreat to Cemetery Hill under orders from Oliver Howard. The confederates saw this as a fearful retreat but Howard called it a tactical retreat to join up with other forces and regroup. This ended the first day of the Battle of Gettysburg.⁹¹ Howard met with great criticism from other officers saying that he had faulty lines and that he did not wait for reinforcements from Doubleday. Lee, despite the retreat of the Union, did not pursue them. He was wary of the number of reinforcements that may have been at Cemetery Hill, but the truth of the matter is, he very well may have been able to take Cemetery Hill if he had pursued them immediately. He chose to stop the advance and regroup. The retreat began at 4:00 p.m. and by 5:25, the Union had met up with reinforcements and made it hard for the Confederates to assault them.⁹² Lee's unease and delay proved to be a vital setback for the Confederacy because Cemetery Hill would prove to be valuable to the eventual Union victory at Gettysburg.

The second day of the battle was even more intense, because Meade was invested in defending Gettysburg and Lee was invested in taking it. Meade decided to fight at Gettysburg due to intelligence that suggested that Lee was bringing up the rest of his army. The major players were very similar to the first day with officers like Cutler and Doubleday, but it also included other officers like Daniel Sickles, G.K. Warren, Strong Vincent, Joshua Chamberlin, Andrew Humphries, and with George Meade in command. The major players on the Confederate side included James Longstreet, Edward Johnson, Richard Ewell, William Oates, and Robert

⁹¹ Edwin B. Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign: A Study in Command*, (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968) p. 292-294

⁹² *Ibid* p. 320-321

Rodes. The battle would take place at Peach Orchard, Little Round Top, Big Round Top, and end at Cemetery Ridge and Cemetery Hill.



When Meade arrived at Gettysburg, the first thing that he did was survey the field. He determined that the Union should place a grave importance on Cemetery Hill, place artillery on Cemetery Ridge, and capitalize on the advantage that the terrain provided. His strategy initially was to attack Ewell's forces using his right flank. Meade understood the importance of a strong right flank, and he decided to take a defensive approach until he knew the strength of the Confederate forces.⁹³ Daniel Butterfield, an advisor to Meade, claimed that Meade had planned for a retreat before the battle even started. Meade denied this and upon further investigation after the war, it was proven that Meade only suggested that they be prepared should the need arise but he was determined to hold Gettysburg.⁹⁴ By 5:00 a.m. Meade had arrived at the battlefield. While Meade was planning his defense, Lee was planning his assault. He opted not to attack Cemetery Hill, but rather decided to see what Meade would do. He said that if the enemy is still there in the morning, then they would attack. General James Longstreet suggested that they attack using a sweeping motion and attack on the Union left. Lee ultimately decided to stay at Gettysburg and went to talk with Ewell. He planned to assault Cemetery Hill at daylight, and Ewell did not like this. He thought that an attack from the left would prove more deadly than an attack from the right. Ewell eventually agreed to his plans but with great reluctance. This is when Lee began to have second thoughts, and sent Ewell orders to retreat to the confederate right, because intelligence suggested that Culp's Hill was unmanned and that it was a good place to go. If they were able to capture Culp's Hill, then Cemetery Hill would be untenable. After midnight, he ordered Johnson to attack Culp's Hill but much to the surprise of Lee, the Union beat him there. Lee then revoked his order

⁹³ Stephen W. Sears, *Gettysburg*, (New York Houghton Mifflin Company, 2003) p. 242-244

⁹⁴ T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and his Generals*, (New York, Alfred A Knopf, 1952) p.264

to move Ewell to the right, keeping him near Cemetery Hill. His plan was to assault the Unions left flank and capture Cemetery Hill.⁹⁵

At 4:00 p.m. Longstreet's men opened fire on the Union batteries, charging in close ranks and trying to take the hill. The Union used the terrain and their height to their advantage. No ground was received or given by either side. The first crisis of the day occurred at Daniel Sickles' extreme left, which would become known as the Battle of Little Round Top. Meade ordered Warren to back up the left at Little Round Top and Warren suggested that they capture the hill at Emmetsburg Road.⁹⁶ The occupation of Little Round Top was a combination of circumstances and a stroke of luck. Warren was waiting for reinforcements and they arrived under Col. Strong Vincent. He arrived just in time to stop the assault and push the Confederates away from Little Round Top.⁹⁷ During this battle, the confederates were attacking Big Round Top. William Oates argued that it was an important position for the Confederates. Oates had the advantage in numbers but Joshua Chamberlin had position. Chamberlin stretched his line to the left to defend against Oates. Each time the Confederates attacked, the Union repulsed them. Once the confederates were weakened, Chamberlin ordered a swift counterattack and Oates men surrendered. This is when the Union line at Little Round Top began to crumble, but Warren arrived with reinforcements. He attacked the troops along Peach Orchard Road, which blocked the confederate counterattack.⁹⁸ This is when the second crisis took place-- the Union's front line was disintegrating. Sickles tried to strengthen his left, and Meade sent a message to Sickles to send all of his troops to the Union left and to hold it at all costs. While this was happening, the

⁹⁵ Edwin B. Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign: A Study in Command*, (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968) p.360-374

⁹⁶ Stephen W. Sears, *Gettysburg*, (New York Houghton Mifflin Company, 2003) p. 264

⁹⁷ "Defense of Little Round Top," Civil War Trust, accessed 03/15/2015, <http://www.civilwar.org/battlefields/gettysburg/gettysburg-history-articles/defense-of-little-round-top.html>

⁹⁸ Edwin B. Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign: A Study in Command*, (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968) p. 390-395

confederates were facing struggles as well. Their assault had not gone as planned. The Union defense of Little Round Top had ruined Hood's plans to attack the right, Longstreet was eager to attack Cemetery Hill, and the confederates were meeting resistance on multiple fronts. The next major conflict came from Caldwell's line. Longstreet assaulted his line while Caldwell sent his men to route the confederates in the Devil's Den. No one expected an attack from the Peach Orchard, and they were forced to retreat back to Little Round Top. Longstreet took this opportunity to fall back to the Peach Orchard and regroup.⁹⁹ This is when the Union faced its third crisis and their biggest challenge of the day. Confederate forces attacked Humphries at Peach Orchard. Humphries was prepared and formed a new line to defend against them, but he received orders to move back to the crest of Cemetery Ridge. Humphries forces were attacked while they were moving and it led to the collapse of the third corps at Peach Orchard. The confederates then attacked Freeman McGilvery at Peach Orchard. He met heavy resistance until Hancock arrived with reinforcements. Along with Humphrey's forces they were able to force the confederates back towards Plum Run and hold them there.¹⁰⁰ The day culminated at Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill. Both hills were being assaulted and Hancock sent two regiments to go to Culp's Hill but only one of the regiments made it there. The other went to Cemetery Hill. Union artillery was the main defense of the hill until reinforcements could arrive. Despite the lack of confederate artillery, Ewell decided to assault the hill. Ewell was not aggressive enough, however. When Rodes went to shift his position after dark, he did not give himself enough time to get into formation. The battle was over by the time he arrived. Johnson's advance did not go as planned either. It was dark by the time that his troops arrived. The confederates missed a big opportunity that day. The chance to envelope the Union right was lost and they failed their

⁹⁹ *Ibid* 402-410

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid* p. 412-417

objective to capture Cemetery Hill.¹⁰¹ Casualties on both sides were massive, and the stage was set for the final day. Johnson had a foothold at the bottom of Culp's Hill and Longstreet had a desirable position at the Peach Orchard. Meade had the higher ground at Cemetery Ridge and had a noticeable advantage.

The third day began with Meade and Lee planning for the day. They both knew the importance of Culp's Hill and that would be the stage of the battle. The major players for the Union would remain very much the same, but on the Confederate side we see the infamous man named George Pickett enter the fray. The battle mainly takes place along Cemetery Ridge and Cemetery Hill, and would be the decisive skirmish of Gettysburg.

¹⁰¹ Edwin B. Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign: A Study in Command*, (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968) p. 427-432

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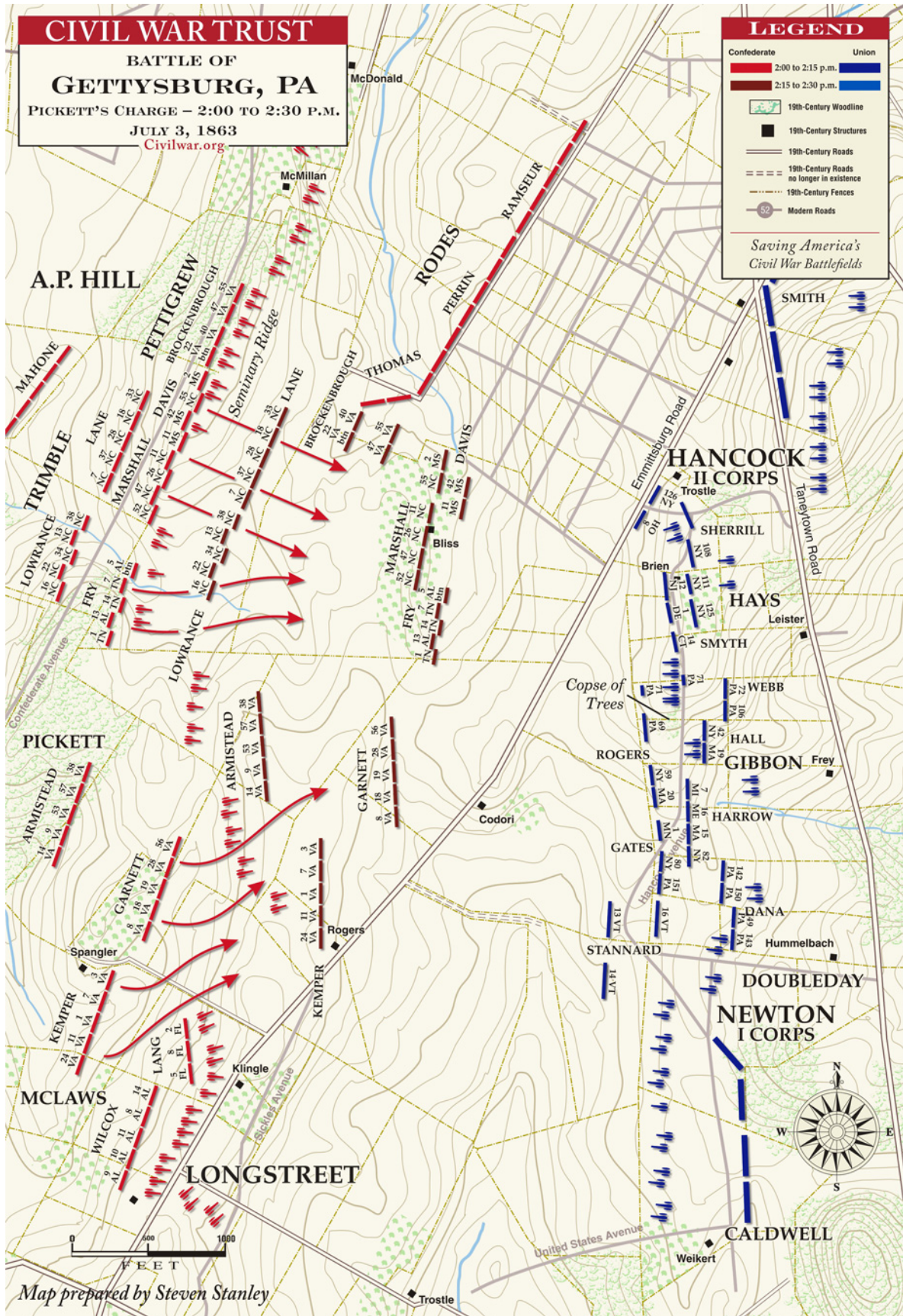
BATTLE OF

GETTYSBURG, PA

PICKETT'S CHARGE - 2:00 TO 2:30 P.M.

JULY 3, 1863

CivilWar.org



The battle began around 4:30 am with Union battery fire. Johnson then assaulted the hill with heavy musket fire, and ultimately failed. He continued pressing the line through means of small arms fire until 8:00 a.m. when he assaulted the hill once again. William's retaliated with heavy musket fire from all sides and forced the confederacy back, breaking their offensive. The Union fought a well-coordinated battle, save for one small episode. There was a skirmish line drawn to probe the enemy defenses, and they were heavier than they anticipated. The 2nd Massachusetts was forced to fall back to the hill, giving up all ground gained during the skirmish.¹⁰² The battle as a whole was over by 11:00 a.m. The Union gained what they had lost and the confederates gave up their effort to take Culp's Hill. This is when Meade began planning the defense of Cemetery Hill. He placed multiple batteries there and began to strengthen the left because he thought Lee would attack there again. This proved to be the case. Before the battle began, Longstreet wrote a letter to General Alexander telling him to not let Gen. George Pickett charge if there was no artillery fire that devastated their forces. It was meant to be as a last resort. Longstreet was losing his nerve, and it showed. Around 1:00 p.m. Longstreet's forces opened fire at the Union line at Cemetery Hill. He bombarded the Union lines with artillery fire. Hancock later said that this was heaviest artillery fire that he had ever seen. He thought that Lee put a lot of reliance on this fire, but in the end it was to no avail. Nine tenths of the shots flew over the Union line at Cemetery Hill. Alexander would later write that the Confederates missed a rare opportunity when they did not take advantage of their exterior lines to aim more of their guns towards the hill. Hunt, in return, did not return fire at full strength. He resorted to slow and carefully aimed shots in order to give them a false sense of security and hoping to urge them to advance prematurely.

¹⁰² *Ibid* p.469-475

After the Union fire ceased, Alexander wrote to Pickett saying that if he was going to charge, he should do so now.¹⁰³ Longstreet was nervous, he said to Alexander, “I do not want to make this attack... I believe it will fail... I do not see how it can succeed... I would not make it even now, but that General Lee has ordered and expects it.”¹⁰⁴ Pickett, along with Pettigrew, charged Cemetery Hill. Union artillery resumed fire, but Pickett’s men pressed on. Coddington comments on the fact that nobody really knew where Pickett went. He says that reliable witnesses saw him ride into battle, but others told how he came back dejected and forlorn. Everyone says that they seemed to have lost him in the smoke.¹⁰⁵ As Pickett’s forces came over Emmetsburg road, McGilvery’s batteries opened fire on him. The confederates could not return fire in equal volume; they had used their ammo stores in the earlier assault. This is when the first signs of faltering appeared for the Confederates. The heavy artillery fire from the right was becoming a major issue for them. They also met trouble from Union General Alexander Hays, an Irishman from Pennsylvania. He charged the field, telling his men to pick up weapons, load them, and return fire. He charged with tenacity and provided a decent cover for the other infantry units.¹⁰⁶ The Union defense was near impregnable, save for one weak spot. There was a weak point near a clump of trees, but Hancock did nothing to remedy it. The Confederate infantry struck there soon after. The Second Corps defended the area, using their strong lines to act as swinging doors and collapse the confederate line from both sides. They held the Confederates at bay and then began their assault on the Confederate left. As Hays was attacking the left, another

¹⁰³ Edwin B. Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign: A Study in Command*, (New York, Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1968) p.493-499

¹⁰⁴ Stephen W. Sears, *Gettysburg*, (New York Houghton Mifflin Company, 2003) p. 408

¹⁰⁵ Edwin B. Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign: A Study in Command*, (New York, Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1968) p.504

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid* p. 505-510

force was making its way to Pickett's right flank.¹⁰⁷ Despite the heavy Confederate losses, they kept pressing on. They pressed the hill after the artillery stopped, but they were met with heavy resistance. They charged with the bayonet, but were gunned down by Union forces quickly. Once the cannonade died down around 3:00 p.m. the main action between the opposing cavalries took place. They fought in the open fields near Hanover road. After heavy bouts of hand to hand combat, both sides retreated back to their lines. This is when all hope seemed lost for the Confederate forces. Lee pulled his forces back in full retreat, and Meade did not pursue counterattack. This would prove to be a grave error on the part of Meade.¹⁰⁸ As Lee was retreating, he turned to one of his officers named Colonel Fremantle saying, "This is a sad day for us Colonel, a sad day; but we can't expect always to gain victories."¹⁰⁹ On July 4, the nation's birthday, Lee completely pulled out of Gettysburg and began his journey back towards the Potomac. He was convinced that the defense there was impregnable and decided to cut his losses and retreat. Meade said in his congratulatory order that their task was not yet complete and that they had to "drive from our soil every vestige of the presence of our invader."¹¹⁰ Lincoln received this order at the telegraph office with joy until he got to the line about driving the enemy from our soil. Lincoln was recorded saying, "Drive the invader from our soil! My God! Is that all?"¹¹¹ Lincoln was not satisfied with repulsing the enemy, he wanted them captured and the war ended. However, this was not the day that the war would end.

Gettysburg was a battle that was pivotal for the Union. This victory began a trajectory that would end with them becoming a real fighting force. After years of poor leadership, they

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid* p.511-515

¹⁰⁸ Edwin B. Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign: A Study in Command*, (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968) p.516-526

¹⁰⁹ Stephen W. Sears, *Gettysburg*, (New York Houghton Mifflin Company, 2003) p.458

¹¹⁰ Meade to Halleck, July 4, 1863, *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, ser. 1 XXVII, pt. 3 (Washington, 1880-1901) p.519

¹¹¹ T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and his Generals*, (New York, Alfred A Knopf, 1952) p.265

were seeing the beginnings of actual leadership. They would not reach their full potential until 1864, however. They would have to suffer poor leadership for just a while longer. The Confederates had suffered a major defeat, one from which they will never recover. Lee would continue to be an effective leader, but as mentioned above, Longstreet began to show the same signs as McClellan. He was unsure of his chances of victory and it almost ended with him retreating prematurely. What separates him from McClellan is the fact that he did not back down, regardless of his fear. Meade also made a mistake that McClellan made. At Antietam, McClellan was content with seeing his enemy flee and did not pursue them. Meade did the same thing after Gettysburg. This battle would be analyzed for years. One writer for the *New York Tribune* wrote on July 1 that the invasion would actually aid the war effort in the North. He reasoned that a Southern invasion would lessen the wickedness of the North invading the South, it would further encourage the draft, and even encourage allowing former slaves into fight.¹¹² The *Harrisburg Telegraph* wrote on July 7 claiming that Confederate invasion of the North destroyed any claims of the South's fight for constitutional rights. He argues that once they crossed the Potomac, it became about destroying the North and not about rights.¹¹³ The New York Times also wrote on July 7, stating that the Union Army redeemed itself after many losses prior to Gettysburg.¹¹⁴ Another critic of the battle was Pickett himself. He blamed Lee for the loss, stating "That old man had my division slaughtered at Gettysburg."¹¹⁵ He fell into depression after this battle and for good reason. Lee's decision to send him in would prove to be the undoing of the Confederate invasion. Meade went on to write "Our own losses were very severe, amounting, as will be seen by

¹¹² Ford Risley, *The Civil War: Primary Documents on Events from 1860-1865*, (Westport, CT, Greenwood Press, 2004) p.215-216

¹¹³ *Ibid* p.218

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, p.218-220

¹¹⁵ Henry Steele Commager, *The Civil War Archive: The History of the Civil War in Documents*, (New York, Tenth Muse Press, 1950) p.465

the accompanying return, to 2,834 killed, 13,709 . . . wounded, and 6,643 missing; in all, 23,286. . . . It is impossible in a report of this nature to enumerate all the instances of gallantry and good conduct which distinguished such a hard-fought field as Gettysburg. . . . I will only add my tribute to the heroic bravery of the whole army, officers and men, which under the blessing of Divine Providence, enabled a crowning victory to be obtained, which I feel confident the country will never cease to bear in grateful remembrance.”¹¹⁶

Lee also wrote about the battle saying, “The conduct of the troops was all that I could desire or expect, and they deserve success so far as it can be deserved by heroic valor and fortitude. More may have been required of them than they were able to perform, but my admiration of their noble qualities and confidence in their ability to cope successfully with the enemy has suffered no abatement from the issue of this protracted and sanguinary conflict.”¹¹⁷

The gears were beginning to turn in favor of the Union. With Lee on the run, and Lincoln planning the next stages of the war, things were beginning to go the Union’s way. Gettysburg proved that the Union was capable of winning, capable of being a strong military force. Meade was strong, and unlike McClellan, he was willing to sacrifice anything to win. This tenacity was something that the Union lacked at this point. Lincoln was confident in Meade, but Meade ultimately was not the answer. Gettysburg was a turning point but not a stark one. It was merely a piece of a much bigger puzzle. It was a step in the right direction but not the solution to their problems. The only thing they lacked was a strong offensive leader, but that factor is just over the horizon. Their time is coming.

¹¹⁶ Major General George Meade’s Account of the Battle of Gettysburg (October 1, 1863), accessed 3/15/15, <http://www.wwnorton.com/college/history/eamerica/media/ch17/resources/documents/gettysburg.htm>

¹¹⁷ Robert E. Lee’s Account of the Battle of Gettysburg (July 31, 1863), accessed 3/15/15, <http://www.wwnorton.com/college/history/eamerica/media/ch17/resources/documents/lee.htm>

Section 4: Post-Gettysburg Leadership

The days following Gettysburg were critical. Meade was trying to force Lee back over the Potomac without risking a battle. He was afraid that attacking Lee would mean defeat for him in the same way that he just attained victory. His defensive victory had ruined him as an offensive general. He continued to pursue Lee until they came to the Potomac. High waters had kept Lee from crossing and this, to Lincoln, seemed like a perfect opportunity for Meade to strike. Despite this, Meade still did not attack. He called a council of generals to decide whether to attack or not. They voted not to attack until they could find a weakness. While they searched, Lee escaped across the Potomac.¹¹⁸ Lincoln was greatly distressed by this, but he quickly began to formulate a new plan. This plan revolved around a recent victory in the West at Vicksburg by Grant. All during June, Grant kept a tight grip on Vicksburg through intense siege operations. On July 5, the day after Lee fled Gettysburg, Vicksburg fell. Before Lincoln knew of his success he said, "If Grant took Vicksburg, why Grant is my man and I am his the rest of the war."¹¹⁹ Grant's strategy was brilliant. He went down the west bank, crossed, and operated below Vicksburg. Lincoln wanted him to move and join up with Banks, but when he was successful Lincoln wrote him saying, "I now wish to make the personal acknowledgement that you were right and I was wrong."¹²⁰ His siege tactics proved successful and gave Lincoln the victory he desired. After this, Grant wanted to move on Mobile; Lincoln liked this idea but thought that Texas was a more important objective. Grant relented and gave his approval. This is when Halleck began to hatch a scheme to get Grant named the Commander of the Army of the Potomac, but Grant stated that he wanted to stay in the West. General William Rosecrans, who was in command in the West at the

¹¹⁸ T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and his Generals*, (New York, Alfred A Knopf, 1952) p.266-268

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, p.272

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, p.272

time, was the opposite of Grant. Grant fought hard and did not pester Lincoln for reinforcements, but Rosecrans fought little and asked Lincoln for more troops often. He would often write Lincoln angry letters over the smallest details, thinking that the government was not supporting him properly.¹²¹ Rosecrans remained inactive for most of July, while fighting was raging in the East and the Union push south was commencing.

In September of 1863, Rosecrans finally moved forward once again. He threatened Braxton Bragg's army at Chattanooga, causing him to evacuate the city and fall back to the South. At this time Burnside was moving into East Tennessee from the north. Rosecrans brashly pursued Bragg southward, and they met at Chickamauga.¹²² The first day yielded no success for Bragg, but on the second day he made a complete break of the Union right. Reinforcements from Longstreet soon arrived and they swept the Union right, forcing Rosecrans to flee the battlefield and ride towards Chattanooga. As he fled, Gen. George Thomas stayed and fought. He held his own, but Rosecrans ordered him to retreat.¹²³ Halleck realized, after this battle, that Chattanooga was an important city to hold in the West. He wrote to Lincoln telling him that Chattanooga provided a gateway into Tennessee and that it was vital for the Union to hold it. He also realized that it held great importance for the Confederacy as well and that they would surely attack it. Lincoln wrote to Halleck that if Chattanooga could be held, the rebellion would die and could only "eke out a short and feeble existence, as an animal sometimes may with a thorn in its vitals."¹²⁴ Lincoln ordered Burnside to join up with Rosecrans, but by the time that Rosecrans wrote Lincoln saying that he held Chattanooga, Burnside had not arrived. Lincoln was outraged,

¹²¹ *Ibid*, p.275

¹²² T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and his Generals*, (New York, Alfred A Knopf, 1952) p.278-279

¹²³ R. Ernest Dupuy, Trevor N. Dupuy, *The Compact History of the Civil War*, (New York, Hawthorn Books Inc., 1960) p.248-252

¹²⁴ Lincoln to Halleck, September 21, 1863, *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln vol. VI*, (Rutgers University Press, 1953) p.470-471

and he wrote to Burnside wondering what happened. Burnside, hearing of Rosecrans that the Confederacy was in full retreat after Chattanooga, decided to move towards Jonesboro. Lincoln ordered him to meet up with Rosecrans once again, but once he realized that he was too far away to join him in short time, he decided to have Burnside hold the territory that he had captured.¹²⁵ When the confederates threatened their supply lines in Tennessee, Lincoln began to question Rosecrans. He then set into motion a complete change in the command system in the West. By mid-October, all departments and armies in the West were under the command of Grant. Grant then relieved Rosecrans and replaced him with George Thomas.¹²⁶

While Lincoln was focusing heavily on the West, Meade was doing very little in the East. Meade had his eyes on Richmond, which made Lincoln uneasy. Much like he did with McClellan, Lincoln told Meade to focus on Lee not on Richmond. Meade said that he would act on this but as he advanced, his customary timidity asserted itself. Meade refused to entertain the idea that he might be able to attack and smash Lee.¹²⁷ He and Lee jockeyed for positions in Northern Virginia. The only real contact that they made with Lee was in early October. Lee took advantage of the retrograde motion of the Union and began a pursuit of Meade. He only got as far as the Rapidan near Bull Run before he realized that Union defenses there were too strong and he checked his advance.¹²⁸ Meade wrote Halleck on October 21, 1863 that the season for active campaigning was about over and that the forces needed to return towards Washington.¹²⁹ At this point, Meade's failures in the east made him look all the more expectantly to Grant in the West. Late in November of 1863, Grant attacked Bragg south of Chattanooga and broke him

¹²⁵ T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and his Generals*, (New York, Alfred A Knopf, 1952) p.282-283

¹²⁶ T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and his Generals*, (New York, Alfred A Knopf, 1952) p.284-285

¹²⁷ *Ibid*, p.286

¹²⁸ William P. Snow, *Lee and his Generals*, (New York, The Fairfax Press, 1867) p.112-113

¹²⁹ Meade to Halleck, October 21, 1863 *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, ser.1 XXIX, pt.2 (Washington, 1880-1901) p.361-363

completely. Bragg fell back to Georgia and the Union finally had a grip on Tennessee.¹³⁰ Bragg had sent some of his forces under Longstreet to attack Burnside, but Sherman was there to meet them. Longstreet retreated to Northern Virginia and Bragg asked to be relieved of command, one of the few major Confederate generals to be relieved up to this point. Johnson replaced him and acquired his troops.¹³¹ One might think that nothing has changed since Gettysburg. Meade was doing nothing, Rosecrans was insubordinate, and Burnside was not doing much good. The only good officer at this point was Grant, and Lincoln began to realize this. This is when the turning point that took place at Gettysburg began to come to fruition.

The winter months of 1863-64 sparked a revival for Union command. Grant started to think about the bigger picture of the West, proposing an assault on Mobile. He proposed that Lincoln send a small force to the Tennessee line to defend it, and in the meantime they send a force down the Mississippi to New Orleans from where he would move to Mobile. He also brought up the topic of replacing the commander in the East. Grant suggested that Sherman take over for Meade. Lincoln presented one condition for his strategy. He wanted the remainder of the Confederates in Tennessee driven out and the troops in Georgia pushed so far south that they could never threaten Tennessee again. Sherman did not receive command of the East, however. Grant also presented some ideas for movements in the East. He recommended that they give up the attempt to capture Richmond from within Virginia. He instead proposed that they utilize the Navy against North Carolina, from which they would invade the state and threaten the railroad lines into Richmond cutting off supplies.¹³² Halleck did not like this plan, because it focused on

¹³⁰ T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and his Generals*, (New York, Alfred A Knopf, 1952) p.290

¹³¹ Ezra J. Warner, *Generals in Gray: Lives of the Confederate Commanders*, (Louisiana State University Press, 1959) p.30

¹³² T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and his Generals*, (New York, Alfred A Knopf, 1952) p.291-296

Richmond and not Lee, and he knew that Lincoln would not approve.¹³³ Late in February, congress passed a bill that revived the Lt. General rank. Lincoln promoted Grant to this rank and by March, Grant replaced Halleck as the general in chief. Grant kept Meade in the East and appointed Sherman to command the West. The newly christened general in chief then put into place two large offensives in the West. He tasked Sherman with moving into Northern Georgia and destroying resources as he went, and Banks with moving on New Orleans en route to Mobile. The Mobile offensive did not take place, however. Banks was moving up the Red River into Louisiana in April, and was defeated there due to grave mismanagement on his part. Grant wanted him removed, but ultimately retained his command but placed E.R.S. Canby in charge of the Louisiana Campaign.¹³⁴

While the Union spent the winter planning, Lee spent his time rebuilding his forces for the defense of the South. At the beginning of March, confederate forces were estimated at 344,000.¹³⁵ By May 1, 1864, Grant was ready to attack Lee. Once he crossed the Rapidan, he attacked Lee there. Lee was prepared with Ewell's and Johnson's forces to meet them. The Union wanted to engage Lee's right and force him into a battle against superior numbers. Lee met them near Chancellorsville and Grant engaged Ewell's forces there. Ewell was able to push back Grant. They both entrenched and remained there for the rest of May 5th. On May 6th, the Union attacked again. Ewell was able to hold his position but Hill was pushed back. Longstreet arrived with reinforcements and broke Hancock's advance. Longstreet was wounded, but continued to push forward. His advance was ultimately repulsed.¹³⁶ As the days moved along,

¹³³ Halleck to Grant, February 17, 1864, *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, ser.1 XXXII, pt.2 (Washington, 1880-1901) p.411-413

¹³⁴ T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and his Generals*, (New York, Alfred A Knopf, 1952) p.310

¹³⁵ William P. Snow, *Lee and his Generals*, (New York, The Fairfax Press, 1867) p.123

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, p.123-129

Grant inched closer and closer to Richmond. His plan was to force Lee into a decisive battle, but Lee's defensive prowess would not allow him this. Grant pushed Lee further and further back but he could not break his army. By the time June arrived, Grant had pushed his way to within nine miles of Richmond. Lee had fled back to the fortifications of Richmond and prepared for a siege. Instead of laying siege on Richmond, Grant decided to withdraw back across the James and move towards Petersburg. He did not capture Petersburg; the confederates held him off long enough for Lee to arrive.¹³⁷ Lee dug in his troops and began his defense of Richmond. Grant then implemented a modified siege operation that cut off the railroads from the south of Petersburg.

This is when Lee implemented a risky maneuver. He wanted to take the pressure off of Petersburg and Richmond by sending Grant back North. He did so by sending troops commanded by Early to assault Washington. He sent them through the valley, where Union troops were scarce and he easily crossed the Potomac.¹³⁸ Grant sent two corps back to Washington, but he remained at Petersburg. He wanted to oversee the siege but he ultimately told Halleck that if Washington needed him, he would return to defend it.¹³⁹ Early actually opened fire on Washington on July 11, but he soon realized the fortifications were too strong and he re-crossed the Potomac that same day. This is when Grant realized that he had to unify the troops in Washington by placing all the forces and commanders near Washington under one general. Lincoln chose Meade for this command. This way he ended two conflicts at once. He removed Meade from the Potomac, while in the meantime unified the forces at Washington.¹⁴⁰ Early began to move on Washington again, so Lincoln temporarily placed Halleck in command

¹³⁷ T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and his Generals*, (New York, Alfred A Knopf, 1952) p.319-320

¹³⁸ William P. Snow, *Lee and his Generals*, (New York, The Fairfax Press, 1867) p.138

¹³⁹ Grant to Halleck, July 9, 1864, *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, ser.1 XXXVII, pt.2 (Washington, 1880-1901) p.134

¹⁴⁰ T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and his Generals*, (New York, Alfred A Knopf, 1952) p.328-329

of the defense of Washington. Grant wrote to Halleck and suggested that they place Philip Sheridan in command of the defense of the forces around Washington, and they were to pursue Early and fight them to the death.¹⁴¹ Sheridan did just that in September when he attacked the confederates at Winchester. He forced Early back towards the south and back across the valley. Also during this month, Sherman captured Atlanta, decimating Johnston's forces as he went.¹⁴²

This is when Sherman presented a bold plan to Grant. He wanted to send Thomas back to Tennessee with 30,000 troops and to set up a defense there. Then Sherman would take the remaining forces and march across Georgia destroying resources as he went.¹⁴³ Grant initially did not like this plan, but ultimately he gave him the approval. Before Sherman invaded Georgia, Hood decided to invade Tennessee. He wanted to draw Sherman back to Tennessee and away from Georgia. Sherman trusted Thomas with the defense of Tennessee and did not return there. Hood suffered a major setback at Franklin, to the point where Hood had no chance to succeed. He invaded Nashville anyway and was decimated by Thomas' forces. Despite his victory, he was relieved of command due to his lack of offensive prowess. His demotion, however, was delayed by weather and he was given a chance at redemption. Thomas attacked Hood on December 15, 1864 and smashed through his line. Thomas gained a victory and left Hood with his army in shambles.¹⁴⁴

While Hood was being pushed out of Tennessee, Sherman was making his way through Georgia. His fabled "March to the Sea" was underway. He made his way south towards Savannah, torching all confederate resources and supplies as he went. Destruction was rampant,

¹⁴¹ Grant to Halleck, August 1, 1864, *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, ser.1 XXXVII, pt.2 (Washington, 1880-1901) p.558

¹⁴² T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and his Generals*, (New York, Alfred A Knopf, 1952) p.337

¹⁴³ Sherman to Grant, October 4, 1864, *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, ser.1 XXXIX, pt.3 (Washington, 1880-1901) p.63-64

¹⁴⁴ T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and his Generals*, (New York, Alfred A Knopf, 1952) p.341-344

and Sherman destroyed food supplies, munitions, railroads, and other necessities for the confederate soldiers quite liberally. Georgia was the main source of food for the Confederacy, so this was a major casualty for them.¹⁴⁵ On December 20, 1864, Sherman captured Savannah which ended his march. He sent a letter to Lincoln presenting Savannah to the nation as a Christmas present. At this point, Sherman and Grant had already begun planning for the next thing. This is when things began to look up for the Union. They finally had a strong General in Chief, a strong leadership presence in the East, and they were winning battles. The strong offensive prowess that Grant offered was just what the Union lacked before with McClellan and Meade. Meade was a good defensive general but lacked that offensive component. Both Grant and Sherman had that offensive component that the Union desperately needed. This change is ultimately what led them to victory.

As 1865 rolled around, all that stood between the Union and victory was Lee and the defense he had set up at Petersburg. On March 25, 1865, Lee hurled his forces at the Union lines in front of Petersburg. His forces met the Union at the bank of the Appomattox River. He sent his forces out hoping to break the line. His forces were repulsed and his troops captured. On April 1, at the battle of Five Forks, the Union broke his right flank and swept through his line.¹⁴⁶ Once Grant took his right, Lee knew that he could not stay in Petersburg. Petersburg and Richmond were evacuated, and by April 3, Richmond belonged to the Union. Jefferson Davis wrote in a letter to the people of the Confederacy, "The hopes and confidence of the enemy have been constantly excited by the belief, that their possession of Richmond would be the signal for our submission..." He also wrote in that same letter, "it is my purpose to maintain your cause with

¹⁴⁵ "Sherman's March to the Sea," *The American Historical Review*, JSTOR, accessed 03/17/15, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1833511?seq=6#page_scan_tab_contents

¹⁴⁶ William P. Snow, *Lee and his Generals*, (New York, The Fairfax Press, 1867) p.153-154

my whole heart...”¹⁴⁷ He was ready to stay the course till the end, and the end was approaching. On April 7, Sheridan pressed with one more attack which ended the resistance from the Confederates. On April 9, at Appomattox Courthouse, Lee surrendered to Grant thus ending the Civil War.

The years following Gettysburg were critical to the Union victory. Meade was thought to have been the hero of Gettysburg, but his fame did not last. This is due to him making the same mistakes that his predecessors made. He got what Lincoln called “the slows” and that inhibited Union progress. He was fearful, slow to take offensive risks, and it ultimately extended the duration of the war, much like the officers that preceded him. The victory at Gettysburg was not fully utilized. Lincoln eventually saw this and began looking elsewhere for more offensive generals. Lincoln found these generals in Grant and Sherman. Their intense tactics and their tenacity is what the Union needed. Sherman’s total war tactics and Grants siege maneuvers proved to be the undoing of the confederacy. They succeeded where McClellan, Meade, Burnside, and Hooker failed. They did not let fear of the enemy stop them, they did not let military politics define their strategies, they wanted victory at all costs and that is just what they obtained. Lee did what he had been doing the rest of the war, but the loss of Jackson and the Union gain of competent leaders was too much for him to overcome. Longstreet was much like McClellan, he was fearful and that impacted his leadership. These factors on both sides of the battlefield are key components in understanding the impact of good leadership and how it can affect the outcome of war.

In conclusion, the Battle of Gettysburg marked the beginning of the turning point of the war. The Union leaders after Gettysburg and their methods were more offensive and tenacious than the

¹⁴⁷ Jefferson Davis, *Jefferson Davis: The Essential Writings*, (New York, The Modern Library, 2003) p. 364-365

leaders before Gettysburg. The Confederates were stronger during the years before, when the Union leaders were weaker, and when the Union gained good leadership the southern leadership suffered. Leadership is what makes or breaks an army and Americans today can learn a lot from leaders of the past so that their mistakes are not repeated.

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